

Dear family and friends,

When turning points occur in a person's life, it is only natural to reflect on all the events that have brought them to that moment. Today, as I look back, I think about people like you who have been with me throughout my journey.

I first came to the United States in 1974, just a year and a half before the communist takeover of Cambodia. I had \$300 in my pocket, my beautiful wife Nara Sok Lek at my side, and a fervent belief in the American dream in my heart.

My first job was as a dishwasher at Blackie's House of Beef and Golden Ox Restaurant on L Street in Washington, DC. I was grateful for the opportunity to work hard.

And doors continued to open. The U.S. government offered Cambodian refugees scholarships for hotel and motel schools in Washington, DC. I took this offer and successfully graduated in 1976. I attended Montgomery College and studied accounting and computer science.



1974 old Town & Country my picture and Dan Ruskin the famous piano player.



On April 7, 1976, The Mayflower Hotel offered me a position as a bartender at the Town and Country Lounge. By 1980, I was promoted to Head Bartender. The job provided a launch pad for my career and an opportunity to demonstrate my determination. I was recognized for my efforts with the following awards:

- Mayflower Employee of the Month
- Mayflower Employee of the Year
- Employee Service Excellence through the Mayflower
- Employee of the Year - Hotel Association DC, March 19th 1987
- Bartender of the Month - Bartender Magazine, 1995
- Capitol Star Award - Washington, DC Convention and Visitors' Association 1996
- Employee of the Year - Lodging Hospitality 1996
- The Platinum Pineapple in Service Award - F & G Management group. 1997



Bill Marriott

Bill Shaw

- 2002 Worldwide Employee of the Year in Service Excellence awarded by Bill Marriott.
- 2003 Best Bartender voted by the Washington Magazine .
- 2004 Master of Mixologists voted by the Washingtonian Magazine.
- 2009 Best Bar voted by Esquire Magazine.
- Further, I was featured in a mix of publications such as Where Magazine.
- The Washington Post, The Washington Times, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal.



While I am very proud of those achievements, I am most proud of the accomplishments in which I am not given awards.

My daughter Bonnary Lek graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park in May 2002 with a business degree in marketing. My son Benjamin Sambonn Lek graduated from Franklin Pierce University with a degree in journalism.

I volunteered to help deliver food to elderly people through churches in the Washington, DC area. I mentored students at Gaithersburg Middle School, performing magic tricks -- the very tricks that I perform for my valued guests behind The Mayflower Hotel bar.

Finally, among the most dear to my heart, is the work behind the Sam Relief, Inc., which we founded in 1999. So far, we have built 27 schools, 345 wells, 100 tons of rice to Angkor Children Hospital at Siem Reap and provided University scholarships all for needy children in Cambodia.

I want to thank all Sam Relief donors who supported our efforts for more than a decade. I'm looking forward as we continue to do God's work. Please visit www.samrelief.org



God sent me to the United States to serve a purpose and care for my first, beloved home of Cambodia. Now, He takes me back to where I belong so that I can take the next pivotal step in my journey.

I am both excited and sad to inform you that I am returning to Cambodia and leaving the Washington, DC area, and the Mayflower, my home for the past 36 years.

I will miss seeing you all behind the Town & Country Lounge bar. I am very sorry that I would not be able to open the new lounge that will be open in October 2012.

My last day at the Mayflower will be on Friday, July 13. Please pass through to say goodbye. I would be very happy to see you.

Sambonn Lek
Head Bartender
Renaissance Mayflower Hotel

